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*From the Diary of Sophia Starling, Concerning Her Night
at the Grand Hotel, Salida, Colorado Territory*

What lies I wrote Aggie,
afraid to tell her I hoped
Mr. Sprockett would kick down my door
like Caesar catapulting molten stones
at the wood forts of jabbering Gauls.
I left the door unlocked, not to show
that half-tamed panther I trusted him,
but to feel his breath—
even if it smouldered of bad whiskey—
scorching my mouth, neck, and breasts.

But he stayed away, afraid
of the souls he has sent to Hell,
of the cheap women he has taken
with not a thought or touch of tenderness.

I'm tired of pretending—
like all the good ladies of my class—
that I've no love of the barn,
have never seen the thrashing dance
of an eager thoroughbred stud;
tired, too, of saving myself for staid nuptials.
I burn as we ride landscapes so glorious
God must have gasped to create them.

If only John would take instruction
from my mare, his stallion.
His nips and nudges set her kicking
when they're hobbled for the night.
Still, she takes care not to bloody him
with hooves sharp as scimitars;
and after her fit of maiden pique
she waltzes taunting buttocks into his flanks.

I fear if I were to play such a wanton,
Mr. Sprockett would leave me in the wilderness,
as shocked as my conventional sister
by what he mistook for a nun's purity.

by Robert Cooperman

Robert Cooperman's poems are from *The Badman and the Lady* soon to be published by Basfol Books.

TO BE CONTINUED IN FUTURE ISSUES

